UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO FACULTY OF MUSIC
2000-2001 Season

CD2001--34

World of Music Series

# PERCUSSION ENSEMBLE

Robin Engelman, director

Tuesday, February 27, 2001
8 p.m.
Walter Hall

FACULTY *of* MUSIC
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

Where Great Music Meets Great Minds

**World of Music Series**

Presents

# PERCUSSION ENSEMBLE

Robin Engelman, director

## PROGRAMME

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|---|---|
| **Toru Takemitsu** | **Rain Tree** (1981)<br>*Dean Pomeroy, Tim Francom - vibraphone, Jyri Kurri* |
| **Jo Kondo** | **Eight Categories** (1991)<br>Danny Tones, Ian Gibson, Jyri Kurri |
| **John Cage** | **Forever and Sunsmell** (1944)<br>*Ainsley McNeaney, vocal solo*<br>*Christa Nercey and Charlene Jack, percussion* |
| **Terry Hulick** | **Rondino** (1957)<br>*Tim Francom, Dean Pomeroy, Ian Gibson, Jyri Kurri* |
| **John Cage** | **First Construction in Metal** (1939)<br>*Tim Francom, piano - Christa Mercey, assistant*<br>*Michael Gambacurta, Dean Pomeroy,*<br>*Ainsley McNeaney, Danny Tones, Brian Lahaie* |

*On April 14, 15 and 16, the percussion ensemble will record a compact disc of tonight's works. We are, therefore, repeating repertoire from our concert last December.*

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## Meet the Artist

Robin Engelman is an Adjunct Professor of Music at the University of Toronto and a founding member of the percussion group, NEXUS. He studied percussion and composition with Warren Benson at Ithaca College, Ithaca, New York and his compositions "Bridge", "Remembrance" and "Lullaby for Esmé" have been recorded by NEXUS. His work for choir and percussion, *"Left to live on..."* (1999), was commissioned by Toronto's Amadeus Choir and written in collaboration with its director Lydia Adams. NEXUS and the Amadeus Choir premiered *"Left to live on..."* in Toronto in June of 1999. His work "*Dance Movements*", commissioned by ArpaTambora - Sanya Eng, harp and Ryan Scott, marimba - was premiered at the American Harp Society's International Harp Convention in Cincinnati in June of 2000.

Mr. Engelman has taught percussion at Ithaca College, York University (Toronto) and the

University of Toronto. He was principal percussionist with three symphony orchestras in the United States before serving in that capacity under Seiji Ozawa and Karel Ancerl with the Toronto Symphony (1968-1972). During the 1980's he was principal percussionist with the Canadian Opera Orchestra.

Mr. Engelman is an avid reader of history and collects books and manuscripts of ancient drum beatings and fife tunes. His interest in music for fifes and drums resulted in him being asked to write the forward to the latest collection of snare drum solos by rudimental legend John S. Pratt. He and Pratt are now collaborating on a book of ancient fife music with drum beatings, historical notes and illustrations.

Mr. Engelman is the conductor and director of the Percussion Ensemble of the University of Toronto's Faculty of Music. The ensemble recently produced the first public concert of C.A.D.R.E., a group of former Canadian snare drum champions dedicated to preserving rudimental drumming excellence, and is planning to record a CD in the spring of 2001 with repertoire by Nexus member Bob Becker, Toronto composer John Beckwith, John Cage, Jo Kondo and Toru Takemitsu.

# Programme Notes

**Rain Tree**

"It has been named the 'rain tree'; for its abundant foliage continues to let fall rain drops collected from last night's shower until well after the following midday. It's hundreds of thousands of tiny leaves – finger like – store up moisture while other trees dry up at once. What an ingenious tree, isn't it?" quoted from "Atama no ii, Ame no ki", a novel by Kenzaburo Oe.

Toru Takemitsu

Dedicated to Kenzaburo Oe and Sylvio Gualda. Premiered by Sumire Yoshihara, Yasunori Yamaguchi and Atsushi Sugawar on 31 May, at Seibu Theatre, 1981.

**Eight Categories**
*for three percussionists*

The title refers to the Chinese traditional classification of instruments by their material, "bayan" (literally, "eight sounds"). The eight categories are metal, stone, earth (clay), skin, string, wood, gourds, and bamboo.

When I received a commission from the Tokyo Summer Festival 1991 to write a percussion trio to be played in a lecture-concert on the ideas and concepts of music in ancient China, part of the conditions given to me was that at least one instrument from each category in "bayan" should be used in the piece, although the composition itself must be in my own contemporary style that has really no connection to any of the Chinese traditional styles of music. What the festival organizer intended by including my new piece besides the traditional repertoire of Chinese music seemed to somehow modernize the traditional concept, or at least to give a contemporary touch to the atmosphere of the whole lecture-concert on ancient music. Thus, besides the fact described above, this piece has no further connection to Chinese traditional music either in its content, style or structure.

The premiere of *Eight Categories* in the Tokyo Summer Festival 1991 was played by Sumire Yoshihara, Yasunori Yamaguchi and Atsushi Sugawara.

Jo Kondo

**Forever and Sunsmell**

This trio for voice and two percussionists was written for a dance by Jean Erdman and is a setting of a 1940 poem by E.E.Cummings. (There is only one other work by Cage for dancers and that is *Credo in US* (1943) for a dance by Merce Cunningham and Jean Erdman.) Cage was also attracted by the writing of James Joyce and the names *Roaratorio – an Irish circus* and *Rolywholyover - A Circus* (the event Cage was preparing for the Los Angeles Museum of Modern Art when he died in 1992) come from *Finnegan's Wake.*

Robin Engelman

Forever and Sunsmell

whereIings whenIings
(daughtersof ifbut offspring of hopefear
sons of unless and children of almost)
never shall guess the dimension of

him whose
each
foot likes the
here of this earth
whose both
eyes
love
this now of the sky

-endlings of isn't
shall never
begin
to begin to

imagine how (only are shall be were
dawn dark rain snow rain-bow &
a

moon
's whis-
per
in sunset

or thrushes toward dusk among whipporwills
or
tree field rock hollyhock forest brook
chickadee
mountain. Mountain)
whycoloured worlds of because do

not stand against yes which is built by
forever & sunsmell
(sometimes a wonder
of wild roses

sometimes)
with north
over
the barn

E. E Cummings, Poems 1923-1954

**Rondino**

*for percussion quartet*

Percussion ensembles began to appear in North American schools during the 1950's after the discovery of John Cage's early percussion compositions in a the New York Public Library by Paul Price. One of the first ensembles was at Ithaca College in Ithaca, New York, where Terry Hulick studied percussion and composition with Warren Benson. Rondino was written for the most commonly available percussion instruments in the schools of that era –tambourine, tom-toms, bass drum, snare drum, wood blocks, triangles and cymbals, etc.– instruments traditionally used in bands and orchestras. *Rondino* is one of the most intelligently constructed, charming and musically demanding works from the infancy of percussion ensembles.

Robin Engelman

**First Construction in Metal**

Having determined by his studies with Schoenberg that he had no feeling for harmony, Cage wrote his early works for percussion and exploited the musical elements of timbre, duration, dynamics and silence. First Construction in Metal is one of fifteen works for percussion written by Cage between 1935 and 1941, and with them, Cage almost single handedly established the Western percussion ensemble. Fifty years later when digital technology made recording the full range of dynamics and overtones of percussion instruments possible, these early compositions of Cage were some of the first and most frequently recorded.

The First Construction is based on the number sixteen. The phrase lengths (in bars) are grouped 4, 3, 2, 3, 4 and the larger sections of the work are grouped in the same order. After 1941, Cage wrote very few works for percussion alone, but in 1986 he said, "I remain a percussion composer whether I write for percusion or not. That is, my work is never based, structurally on frequency, but rather on duration considerations."

Robin Engelman

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*As of January 31, 2001*

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Dr. Arthur Plettner
1904-1999

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